WILLIAM DENTON MOULTON

(The following are a few incidents that have not been recorded in his history that give more insite into his life. We are grateful to his daughter, Bertha Elizabeth Moulton Bowman and granddaughter, Teenie Montgomery Rasband, who have supplied us with this information.)

William Denton Moulton was born July 17, 1845, in Irchester, Northamptonshire, England, the second child of Thomas Moulton and Sarah Denton. At the age of 12, William's parents, 3 sisters (Mary Ann, Charlotte, and Sophia Elizabeth) and 2 brothers (Joseph and James Heber) and William joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and left immediately after for America in May 1856. His mother, Sarah Denton, had been hurried on board the wooden ship and while it lay in dock in the English Channel, a son, Charles Alma, was born. Uncle Charles was often heard to say he didn't know what nationality Charles Alma was.

After a 5 weeks trip by water aboard the "Thornton", the family arrived in New York Harbor on June 14, 1856, and embarked by railroad for Winter Quarters. On June 26, 1856, they went from there to Iowa City where they stayed for a few days before leaving by handcart to Salt Lake City, Utah. James B. Willie was captain of the 120 handcarts, 6 wagons and 500 people of which 66 died on the journey due mostly to exposure to the extreme cold. The company arrived in Salt Lake on November 9th. During the journey the company had been passed by other immigrants and several missionaries returning home from Europe who reported the condition of this handcart group to President Brigham Young. At once relief parties were sent out to meet this company with wagons loaded with clothing, bedding and provisions to help these people. Great had been their struggles through deep snows and piercing winds along the Platte and the Sweetwater. After their arrival in Salt Lake, cold weather set in and severe it was. One brother, James Heber, had his fingers on his left hand frozen to such an extent that it was necessary to amputate them.

The Moulton family remained in Salt Lake City for 3 weeks before moving on to Provo where they lived until the spring of 1860. Then they moved to Heber City. There were only 9 families living in the Heber Valley at that time. While in Provo, a son was added to the family (Denton) and later in Heber, 2 more sons were born - John Ephraim and George Franklin. This made a family of 7 boys and 3 girls. They became one of the most influential families in the Valley. The first few winters were very hard and the brothers helped their parents to get wood for fuel and take care of what stock they had and also hunt for what natural foods as the valley could supply.

After growing to manhood amid the struggles of pioneer life, William became a member of the Black-Hawk Army, who so bravely protected the homes of their loved ones. Indians were becoming numerous and a great menace to the community, stealing their horses and cattle.

At the age of 22, William married Mary Lavina Lee. Three years later they went to the Endowment House for their endowments. Soon after, he left for Florence, Nebraska to meet the immigrants. Many temptations awaited these young teamsters as you will see by the following items taken from letters he wrote home to Mary, his wife. These letters were written in 1868, in ink and on the best of paper and are in fine condition.

First letter, Friday, June 26, 1868 on the Muddy road

"We are camped 10 miles below Muddy. We are enjoying good healt: and have had a pretty lucky trip so far, with the exception of the Chack-Creek bridge swimming away. Don't know whether it was we Bull-Whackers (teamsters) that scared it away or not, but I do know it went away just as we got to it. We had the pleasure of seeing it go, and of seeing the Coalville-ites buil another on Sunday, instead of going to meeting.

We had plenty of dust for first part of our trip, and the sun was hot enough to roast beef steak, if we had only had some to try it. Then after that, come a cold spell which ended in a big snowstorm 3 inches deep. You would have thought it was the 45th day of December.

We caught up with the company on Tuesday at Cashe Cave. We had a very good captain, and 63 wagons. We are having flap-jac and molasses for a change for supper."

Sunday, June 28, 1868 Hams Ford 2 o'clock p.m.

"The sorrowful news came into camp last night that some teamster that were with the train ahead of us, had drowned in Green Rive: The particulars of it hasn't come yet."

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Monday, June 29, 1868 Green River, Wyoming

"We crossed Green River today with our wagons on the ferry-boat. We have been swimming our cattle across all day and there is about one third of them to swim over tomorrow.

We have learned the particulars of those men that was drowned in Green River last Thursday. There were five from San Pete and one from Cache Valley. They was ferrying their cattle and had the boat loaded. They (the cattle) crowded to one corner of the boat and sunk it and broke the tug rope. There were two couples seen going down in each others arms. It has cast a sadness over us."

Wednesday, July 15, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

"We have enjoyed good health and strength since we left home, and we thank the Lord for it. We hope the ones at home are enjoying the same blessings. I wrote you a letter at Green River, Wyoming and one at Pacific Springs. We had a general wash day Monday, if you could have seen us do woman's work you would have had a good laugh at our awkwardness. I tried to do some mending, but was a good deal worse at that than I was at washing. I expect my cloths will need mending considerable before I get back, having to stay here so long. I would object to being a bachelor, if for nothing more than having to wash and mend for myself. I am not homesick yet, but I would like to be home among those I love so dear.

I have been in rough places but I never was in as rough a one as the glorious town of Benton. If I were ask to be a judge I would say that they were a God forsaken people, very near perfect in wickedness and corruption of this world. I long to see the time when we can bid them adeau and start for our peaceful homes in the West, though I believe the Lord is with us, to watch over and prosper us in well doing. It would not have been quite as bad for us if we could have worked for something to have bought some more clothes with, as wear these out. It is raining very fast to day and looks like continuing. I expect we will have to live on rather hard fare before we get back. If I had a good bowl of bread and milk 3 times a day I could get along until I get back. Don't send a letter to South Pass City, they charge 50 cents a ___ for mailing. (Father closes his letter with a verse,)

Have you missed me at home? It would be an assurance most dear;
For to know at this moment my loved one was saying,
I wish he was here.

Thursday, July 16, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

"Arrived at North Platte on July 11. All well. Are now camped 5 miles down the river below the railroad. Five of us boys and the captain and assistant went up yesterday afternoon and had the pleasure of seeing the first railroad train cross the Platte Bridge and of seeing them lay the rails across the bridge before the train came up. They are completing the railroad at an average of about one mile and a half a day.

We are now living among what is called the Civilized World. There is a little town five miles from us called Benton. It is made up of liquor stores, gambling saloons and houses of illfame. They are not afraid for the folks to know it, for they put up their signs in plain sight, and in big letters. If this place is not Hell, it is just as near it as you can imagine.

Why they think no more of killing a man out here than you would think of killing a chicken at home. There is scarcely a night but what a man is killed. There was five killings last week. It is almost dangerous to be around them. A man must mind his own business and keep away from them as much as he can.

I get cross sometimes to think that we have to lay around them so long, doing nothing, when there is so much to do at home, among those I love to be with. I realize that there is no place like home among the Mormons.

There has been some mismanagement this year, some where for we expect to have to wait here from 4 to 6 weeks yet, for the immigrar

They did not start from Liverpool until the 20th of June to cross the sea in sailing vessels, which has no certainty how long it may take them to cross. They might come across in 4 weeks or they might be 6 to 8 weeks.

There are only twenty-four hundred (2,400) coming this season, which is about enough to load 3 or 4 trains, and it happens to fall to our lot for to wait until the last immigrants arrive.

The other trains have got the privilege of loading up with freight, if they can get it, but that is rather hard to get just no

Unless some of the trains can get loaded up and started for home, we will have to move a good deal further down the Platte for feed, as the grass is scarce here and there is over two-thousand (2,000) head of stock to feed on it.

The Platte country up here is a dry barren mountainous country. We are about fifty (50) miles above the old immigration route, where the Platte River comes out of the mountains.

Our cattle belonging to our Valley are all looking well. We have some cattle from our Valley that never done us any good acoming down, and I don't suppose they will acoming back. They were tender footed before we got to Weber, (in Utah).

I had to let George Noaks have one yoke out of my team to bring his wagon down here. There is a kind of disease among the cattle that kills them off in a half hour after we can see they are sick. There is 8 or 10 head died with it in our train, but none of them belonging to our Valley."

Sunday, August 9, 1868 Holmans Camp, North Platte, Nebraska

"I have enjoyed good health since I left home, and I thank the Lord for it, for I realize that through him we receive all our blessings. We all feel a little downcast sometimes to think that we can't get any letters from you at home, to know how you are enjoying yourself and whether you have enjoyed good health since I left you, but I am in hopes that I will be home in time to spend Christmas and New Years with you. We are expecting to get our passengers in about a week, but we have been deceived so many times that we shall not believe we are going to start until we get half way home. We could have been at home now if the immigrants had been here ready when we first came down. We have had the opportunity of seeing three companies of the immigrants and some of the teamsters has used it pretty well. It was not more than three hours after they got in camp before they were elbowing them around like old sparks. There was a dance got up for them, and they had quite a lively time.

I left camp this afternoon on horse back to a camp of immigrants, four miles off, to see the man that had charge of shipping the immigrants at Liver-pool. I read the names of all immigrants and found a few that had relatives in our place. Not as many as was expected. There was Howarth and Crook names. They all seem to think that we will be loaded with Denmarkers or wooden shoes.

Our captain has given me the privilege of driving a commissary wagon. It is loaded with flour and ready to start whenever they say "go" and I hope it won't be long."

Monday, August 10, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

"I think we will be on our way inside of ten days. I don't care how soon we bid adieu to this, civilized world as they call it.

We have very little sickness in our camp, but Willard Carrol has been very sick the last 5 days. I thought it was going very hard with him but I am glad to say he is very weak yet but is on the improve, and I think he will be able to get around by the time we have to start. He was took at first with a cramp, something like the Cholera Morbux. We got that worked off and then he took the diahreah, which weakened him down until there was scarcely anything of him left.

I would like to be at home with you, and I trust I shall before long. There was one company left here Saturday, and two more will leave here tomorrow. There are several companies ahead of them but they did not come this way.

There are two more trains to load before us, and then comes our turn to take what the "Cobbler threw at his wife."

My address now will be in care of Captain Holman, Robison Ferry, Green River, Wyo."

Friday, August 21, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska (evening)

"I am well at this time, and have been since I left you. We boys all feel cross today, (I can assure you) about the news we have just heard about from our captain.

He told us this morning that our immigrants would be here in the morning, ready to load up. But when he went up town today, there was a telegram stating that they left New York last night. It will take them ten days to get here to us, and then unless we have better luck than the rest of the trains have had, we will have to wait 4 or 5 days after they are here before their luggage comes, which will be two more weeks at least. We have had time to go to Europe and preach the gospel to the gentiles and convert and baptize them, and immigrate them here by this time. That is, if they weren't too hard to convert. But we could have gone to Florence, Nebraska for them. We would have rather done it than to have stayed here until this time. There is nothing that makes me feel so mean, as laying around doing nothing like have been doing for the last 6 weeks.

I am getting so lazy, that I am afraid that I won't be able to earn a honest living when I get home.

We are going to move camp tomorrow, to hunt feed for our animals and look out for winter-quarter. We expect to go about 25 miles from the road to find it.

It will be one days travel. Oh, if it was only towards home.

Tell Agnes Daybell that her father and mother and brother are all well and along with us, and that they will come in with our teams, at the same time that we will. Send me a letter to Robinson Ferry, Green River, Wyoming."

Monday Morning, August 31, 1868, North Platte, Nebraska

"I feel much better and happier than I did in my last letter. Our happiness comes from the news, that instead of waiting another ten days, our immigrants have arrived at last and there are signs of us being enabled to bid adieu to this lonesome and forsaken country, and to return to those we love in our mountain homes.

We have about 700 Danish in our company and they are the best looking Danes that ever left Denmark. Our camp looks like a young Denmark and not to young at that.

William Lindsay and George Noaks are loaded with Danes. I had a load of flour but it took 700 pounds to make the first week's rations for them and they gave out a week's rations before so my wagon was unloaded.

It is getting pretty cold in this country, it froze ice 1/4 of an inch thick last night. Willard Carrol and Benjamine Norris are loaded with English. The last of the immigrants have just arrived this morning. The first arrived on the 26 of August. All the luggage has not come yet.

We expect to start out at 2 p.m. this afternoon, luggage or no luggage, for we are tired of waiting. What kind of a load I get I can't say yet for they are going to load the rest of the train first. I may get freight yet. The captain promised me a load of freight if there is enough left for me after they put what they can in the passengers wagons.

If I don't get freight I will get passengers and it is all the same to me. Our teams are all right at present, but are getting very poor for want to good feed.

We will be home by the last of September if all goes well."

(This is the last of the personal letters between William and his wife. This does not include all the contents of each letter, only parts.)

The year after William's return (1869) the crops failed and living conditions were so bad that he went to cut ties for the Union Pacific Railroad, which was slowly wending its way westward. It seemed they were to be apart again.

William and Mary moved from Heber to a large ranch he bought, nine miles north of Heber. The beef and milk route contract was secured by William from the Ontario Mining Company at Park City, Utah some five miles from the ranch. William built a large rock house with fifteen rooms. It was two stories and had three large basement cellars. Here he was able to build up a prosperous business, employing many young men. He was a great influence for good to the surrounding territory by buying stock of all kinds and hay. He was pointed out as the "model man" of the community and that his hired help could improve if they would pattern after him in industry, intregrity, honesty, and in living the gospel.

Bertha Bowman writes:

"Father and mother were married seven years and had no children which was a great sorrow to both of them. Mother was urged to allow Father to take another wife as polygamy was being practiced at that time. Mother, being of a very jealous nature, and her great love for Father, and his love and devotion for her caused her to hesitate and pray earnestly for the Lord to show her if it was right. She was promised that if she would consent, she would have children. Finally, after much persuasion (not only by Father but by the authorities of the church), she consented to a second wife. On December 15, 1873, he married Mary Ann Davis, daughter of William Davis, who lived one and a half miles south of their home, she was also a pioneer girl.

In the following year, both wives gave birth to sons. The second wife having the first. Mother had in all five children - William Thomas Denton, Orson L., Sarah Ellen, Ranch and Bertha Elizabeth. Aunt Mary Ann (second wife) also had five children - William Davis, Moroni Davis, Thomas Davis, Elizabeth and Hyrum.

The two families lived in the same house. There was one long dining room where they all ate together.

Father died a young man, only 40 years old, of typhoid pneumonia on January 14, 1883, when I was just three months old. Father had lived a life of activity as an average person 65 years old."

William was known all around the area as being a kindly, friendly and charitable man. Often at Christmas time he would slaughter great beefs and give to the needy. He was buried in the Heber City cemetary which he helped to make.

Mary never married again, being a widow for over 49 years. She always said she buried all the love she ever had for any man in the grave with William. The song "Ever of Thee I'm Fondly Dreaming," was one of William's favorite songs which he often sang to Mary and she requested it to be sung at her funeral by her granddaughter, Nellie Moulton Earl.

"EVER OF THEE"

Ever of Thee, I'm fondly dreaming;
Thy gentle voice my spirit can cheer;
Thou wer't the star that mildly beaming,
Shone o'er my path when all was dark and drear;
Every kind tho't like a bird flies to Thee; Ah,

Chorus:
Never till life and memory perish,
Can I forget how dear thou art to me;
Morn, noon and night, where e'er I may be,
Fondly I'm dreaming ever of Thee,
Fondly I'm dreaming ever of Thee.

Ever of Thee, when sad and lonely,
Wandering afar my soul joy'd to dwell;
Ah, then I felt I loved Thee only;
All seemed to fade before affections spell,
Years have not chilled the love I cherish;
True as the stars hath my heart been to Thee, Ah;